



Army Transforming America

Civilian Conservation Corps

ANY soldier policing a field site after a training mission is well familiar with the adage “Leave the area better than you found it.” The Army’s new Partnership for Youth Success program seeks to do the same with new recruits. After completing an initial enlistment, soldiers are eligible for civilian employment with some of America’s top companies. In essence, by training and providing hands-on skills to its young soldiers, the Army has equipped the nation’s sons and daughters to succeed in life and become valuable assets to their communities.

The Partnership for Youth Success program is only the latest example of the Army transforming its charges for the better. The most notable was the Civilian Conservation Corps established by President Franklin Roosevelt and Congress during the 1930s. The CCC, designed to redeem desperate young men in an extraordinary economic crisis, served as an employer of last resort. Administered by the Army in cooperation with the Departments of Labor and Interior, the CCC moved millions of men off the relief rolls and onto much-needed conservation work around the country.

The Army organized the men in military-style companies at its various camps. The workers wore World War I-era uniforms and learned discipline and leadership skills. The Army supplemented its on-duty supervision and training in conservation techniques with off-duty instruction in basic reading, writing and vocational skills. These useful skills helped departing corpsmen find regular employment when they left the camps. Many even enlisted in the Army for World War II.

Overall, the Army’s impact was profound. As one historian wrote in summary: “The corps removed men from the grinding desolation of the Great Depression and gave them a chance to restore their self-esteem so that when they returned to their communities, it was as young men of promise, and not as the debris of a wrecked economy.” — *CPT Patrick Swan*